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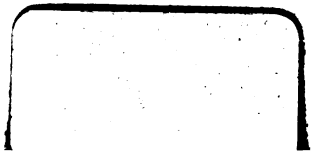

To the artist of this cover
and 46 Minna
with the writer's love
May. 1895.

THE VEILED FIGURE

AND

OTHER POEMS

WILLIAMS AND NORGATE
14 HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON
20 SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH
AND 7 BROAD STREET, OXFORD.

1895.

LOAN STACK

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Several of the shorter poems are reprinted from "Free Life," the "Woman's World" and "A Threefold Cord" by kind permission of the respective editors. The Sonnet on "Love and Death" is reprinted, by the Editor's permission, from the "Pall Mall Gazette," where it gained the Second Prize in a Competition for a poem on one of G. F. Watts' pictures.

THE VEILED FIGURE.

A DRAMATIC POEM.

"God's possible is taught by his world's loving."
(E. B. BROWNING.)

"Who will shew us any Truth?"

PERSONS.

APOLLODORUS	- -	*A follower of Socrates.*
CLEISTHENES	- -	*His Father.*
HESTIA	- -	*Betrothed to Apollodorus.*
LICHAS	- -	*A Spartan Priest.*

A Herald. A Messenger.
Chorus of Priests and Citizens.

Scene	- -	THE COAST OF SPARTA.
Period	- -	427 B.C.

Note.—This poem is the first of a projected series, dealing with the search for Truth in representative ages and races of the world. Hence its scene and date.

THE VEILED FIGURE.

(Apollodorus enters, supporting his aged father. It is sunset.)

Cleisthenes.

Son, are we there? Mine eyes are clouded o'er,
The dusk of Hades steals upon my soul.
O set me down, ere I be dead indeed;
Thou'rt strong and young, must make no truce with' Death,
Lest haply Dis should envy thee thy youth
And draw thee down with swift, relentless hand
To dwell with him in yonder nether world.
Now it is near me. Tell me, can'st thou see
The great Messenian Bay?

Apollodorus.

Yes, there it shines
Like Sparta's helm! And yet, I would thine eyes
Might in its stead have rebeheld once more
Phalerum's Bay. O father, we are Greeks!
What matters it if Hades lies before?
The fame of Salamis can never die
And thou hast fought at Salamis.

Cleisthenes.

Ah, true!
But now all battles, pageants, sights of war

Troop like grey ghosts before my fading sight
And summon me to Hades. Keep thine arms
Close round me, O my son. I yet would feel
Their warm young strength, the last remaining tie
That holds me to this real and breathing world.
I did not want for courage; oft in shock
Of battle, when the helms and burnished spears
Flashed serried lightnings round my head, I laughed,
And dared the gods to combat. Now, ay me!
My life creeps low, and all my pulses fail.
I hate the thought of death; it robs a man
Of all that makes him half a god on earth
And sends him forth disconsolate, unreal,
To range with shades in that dim underworld
Where I must now descend.—What music's that
Approaching?

Apollodorus.

Music, father? I hear none.

Cleisthenes.

Ah then, 'tis well. I feared this was the day
Our Ephors set apart for thanksgiving
At Zeus's temple. Every citizen
Must join the sacrificial throng, and thou
Would'st leave me here to die alone.

Apollodorus.

Not though
Zeus hurled his bolt from high Olympus' top

And struck me dead! I love thee, father, more
Than to insult our great All-Father's name
By offering empty tributes at his shrine
While thou art left in thine extremity.
If my poor care can soothe this bitter hour,
Trust me, I'll never leave thee.

Cleisthenes.

Thanks, my son.
The thunders of the everlasting sea
Grow faint, and mingle dimly with thy voice
Like some far echo from tumultuous years.
My senses fail.

Herald. (*Passes, crying.*)

Know, all ye citizens!
The priests come hither, passing to the shrine
Of Zeus, to offer vows and praises due
For our late triumph at Platæa. Hear!
The Ephors will, that they who on the road
Are passed by the procession, shall leave all
And join it, under penalty of death.
Praise to the gods!

(*Passes on.*)

Cleisthenes.

What voice was that, my son?
I could not hear the words.

Apollodorus.

Some messenger
Sent to acclaim Platæa's fall. 'Tis nought

To thee or me. How is it with thee now?
The air grows colder. Let me wrap my cloak
Well round thee. Over bay and shore the sun
Glows like Hephaestos' shield, the hills gleam pink
As Aphrodite's sea shell; yet more rare
The undying flame wherein your names are writ
To flash down all the ages—you who stemmed
The Persian tide of darkness from our land,
Our little land of light. O never fear
That Death hath any power o'er deeds like yours.

Cleisthenes.

The memory may live, the man must die.
O me most miserable! forced to roam
With wretched shades, where never shines the sun!

Apollodorus (*Aside.*)

How can I tell him of that new sweet faith
The great Athenian teaches, that the Good
Shall find a truer, fuller life through Death,
Because the immortal Archetype they sought
To imitate, shall draw them to Itself,
With all their peers? The sinning, careless gods
Who love us not, but seek their selfish ease,
Are all he knows.

(*Hestia comes towards them.*)

Hestia.

Apollodorus!

Apollodorus.

Hestia !

Whence com'st thou ?

Hestia.

From the great procession's midst
I hastened in advance to seek thee.

Apollodorus.

Child !

Who told thee I was here ?

Hestia.

Cleon, thy friend.
Know'st thou the harsh decree, that all should join
In this solemnity, on pain of death ?
The train has left the city's gates, the flutes
Give forth shrill triumph : youths and maidens strew
The path with myrtles ; wherefore tarriest thou ?

(*Perceiving Cleisthenes.*)

Ah ! I am blind and senseless ! He is ill.

Apollodorus.

Dying, my Hestia. Stay awhile in peace
Beside him ; the procession comes not yet,
The flutes sound faintly through the evening air.
Kneel down, and let him feel thy warm white arms
Around him. Could we lighten e'en a jot
The darkness of that path he treads alone
Down to the shadowy realm he hates ! Ay me !

Our faith in that fair after-life to him
Is foolishness.

Cleisthenes (*Regaining consciousness.*)

My son; art thou still there?
Thou wilt not leave me? Who is this?

Hestia.

'Tis I,
Thy son's beloved, Hestia. Can I ease
Thy pain at all? Shall I implore the grace
Of high Apollo?

Cleisthenes.

No, no prayers; the gods
Care not for men. I tread the dreary path
That heroes passed away have trod. What more
Can any know? But thou, fair child, art young,
And life strews roses 'neath thy feet. Approach,
Apollodorus, take her hand in thine,
Tell me thou lov'st her. Trust me, boy, in life
There's nothing worth a little present love,
The love that man bears woman. 'Tis a flower
Born of pure sunshine, hanging o'er the depths
Of endless darkness. Might I but have lived
To see thee wedded!

Apollodorus.

Father, she *is* mine,
Mine wholly. See, I take her in my arms
In one long clasp of soul with soul—her eyes

Know I am hers to all eternity.
What after-hour can better this? But Love
Is not of yesterday, nor like a flower
That perishes; its light and perfume pierce
That circling darkness, and transfigure it
Like young Persephone's rare loveliness
Set in the heart of Dis's realm.

Hestia.

Thine eyes
Are strange and sweet as his who looks on Death
And knows it thrall to Love. O loose me now—
I fear I know not what—some ill. Is that
The festal chant? I hear the measured tread
Of many feet approaching. O ye gods!
Must we forsake the dying?

Apollodorus.

I stay here.

Hestia.

Then I stay too.

Apollodorus.

No, my beloved, no!
Grant me this last extremest boon! Be strong
To live thy sweet, pure life in utter faith
That all we know of perfect nobleness
Through Socrates, our master, may be yours,
And others, through your love, be lifted up
To know the eternal Beauty whence we spring

Yet visible to strenuous souls, who seek
Here, through the transient loveliness of earth,
To mirror it in act. Them it shall draw
Through Death to nearer union with Itself,
And earth is but an antechamber then
To Zeus's palace, into which we pass
Rejoicing, as a son who coming home
From distant conquest, seeks his father's halls
With lights and pæans.

Hestia.

Hark! I hear the chant
Approaching nearer. Take not yet thine eyes
Away from mine. O! let me drink their strength
Deep, deep, through every fibre. I'll be strong,
Not less strong than thou think'st me. Hold me fast,
Breathe thy pure spirit wholly into mine
That I may overlive this bitterness
And quit me as befits thy bride—bride now
Of one high memory and deathless hope.

(*Chorus of priests and citizens, approaching.*)

Hail to thee, Zeus! Lo! we bring thee oblations,
Mightiest Father of gods and of men!
Shaker of cities and smiter of nations,
Giver of conquest to Sparta again!

Thou from thy throne 'midst the shining Immortals
Lookest unmoved o'er the dim tracts below;
Famine-struck cities fling open their portals
Wide, at thy nod, to the conqueror's blow.

Bring we white bulls crowned with odorous lilies,
Cypress majestic, and garlands of oak;
Let their blood stream royal-red out, and fill his
Altars with sacrifice, nostrils with smoke.

Youths, maids, and elders, we lift up our voices;
Loud, in one pæan, our thanks let us raise!
While Lacedæmon's glad spirit rejoices,
Shout we, her children, the Thunderer's praise!

(*The procession stops opposite the group of three.*)

Lichas.

Know'st thou the edict, youth? Then take thy place
And follow to the shrine of Zeus.

Apollodorus.

Not so;
I cannot leave my aged father here
At point of death; I come not.

Lichas.

Foolish youth!
Great Zeus must first be honoured, not the sick,
Who scarce are men.

Apollodorus.

Is he, the All-Father, pleased
That earthly fathers should be left to die
Untended, for his honour? Pass, O priest;
I stay, and pay the penalty.

Lichas.

'Tis Death.

Apollodorus.

That know I.

Lichas.

Ah, methinks thou'rt one of those
In whom the mischievous Athenian
Hath wrought corruption, teaching them to scorn
Our country's gods, and set up in their stead
Some thin abstraction, shaping thence their acts
Subversive to religion, order, law,
And all that made our fathers great. This sect
Must be suppressed. And yet 'tis pity too
That thou should'st be its victim. I recall
Thy face, and rumour tells thy valiant deeds
At our late glorious siege. Bethink thee, youth,
Forsake thy false philosophy, and live.
Thy father cannot miss thee, he is past
All knowledge of things present.

Apollodorus.

Vain, O priest,
Thy arguments. My choice is made, and hence
I move not till my father breathes his last.

Lichas.

Then words are wasted on thee. One short hour
Is thine on earth—no more. Lead on!

(*The procession passes on.*)

Apollodorus.

My life—
My Hestia—the time has come;—be strong
And leave me. See, thy kinsfolk beckon thee
To follow.

Hestia.

I will go.

Apollodorus.

One kiss—farewell!

Hestia.

Though Death were sweet to this, I love thee more
Than to deny thee.

Apollodorus.

Thou wilt come again?

Hestia.

Yes, though the fiery waves of Phlegethon
Rolled straight across my path.

(*She joins the procession. It passes on chanting.*)

Chorus.

When, far below thee, the war-din is clashing,
Thou from the shining ones sendest thy son
Ares, to succour thy favoured ones flashing;
Who can withstand him? The battle is won!

Bring we white goats with their milkier fleeces
Than Ocean-spray, children of mild Amalthea,
She who on Ida once nursed thee, for Greece's
Glory preserved, by thy mother, great Rhea.

Lacedæmonians! lift up your pæan!
Let the brass clash, and the flutes sweetly ring!
Rend with your praises the high empyrean!
Hail to thee, Thunderer, mightiest King!

(*The chant dies away in the distance.*)

Cleisthenes.

Where art thou, son?
Methought I heard strange voices. Is the maid
Still here?

Apollodorus.

No, she is gone. Her kinsfolk came
To seek her. Theirs the voices thou didst hear.
(*Aside*)
Great Truth, forgive the lie I needs must tell
For thine own sake.

Cleisthenes.

Thou wilt be happy, boy
In wedded years. I die more easily
To think what days shall yet be thine, when I
Am cold in earth.

Apollodorus.

Great happiness is mine
In loving her—thou sayest true.
(*Aside*)
O God!
Each word he speaks burns deeper through my heart
Than red-hot steel.
—Wilt thou not let me raise
Thy head a little, father? So, thy breath
Comes not so painfully. The sun has sunk
Beneath the Ocean's rim; there, in the West,
Above the dusky isles, Selene drives
Her silent, silver chariot. Shall I pour
Libation to the god of Day?

Cleisthenes.

No, no—
The god of Day is nought to me; my days
Are sunk eternally in Death's deep sea
Whence none return. For me, his blessed light
Is quenched for ever.

Apollodorus.

Father,—O would that I
Might pierce thy cruel darkness with that hope
Beyond all telling precious—Gods! his breath
Flutters, and stops. His hands are icy cold.
Speak to me, father! I am here! O speak!
Dost thou not know me? Here I press my hand
Warm on thy heart. Ah! it is deathly still,
Silent for ever! On thine ashen face
The pure, cold moonlight rests, but thou art passed
Beyond these earthly lights. The mystery
Hid deeper from men's sight than ocean caves
Where Proteus lies, thou knowest now.
—And I
Shall know it soon. . . .
Unutterably strange
It seems, to think that ere yon moon's white car
Has climbed to midmost heaven, I shall be cold
And motionless as this unanswering Form
Stretched here beside me. O most strange! to pass
In one quick moment from the fullest rush
Of vigorous, bounding pulses, to this stern
Unending, awful silence of the dead.
What voice has ever pierced it? Even he—
The Wisest, can but bow his head and own
He nothing knows. What if that life beyond
He reasons of beneath the olive grove
Be unsubstantial as the Happy Isles
That old Odysseus sought, when forth he fared

O'er the untravelled seas, and ne'er came back
To re-behold his rock-girt isle?
—The wind
Blows salt and strong across the tossing bay;
I hear the distant sound of drums and pipes
And clashing cymbals. Soon the rite is o'er,
The temple gates flung open, and the crowd
Pass home with torches, peacefully to rest
Within the sleeping city's glimmering walls
Beside their loved ones. Soon the train will pass,
And Hestia with it.
O my love—my love!
I see thee stretch thy tender arms in vain
Across the ruthless, silent gulf whence I
May nevermore return, to fold thee fast,
Fast to my breast, and take thy little head
Between my hands, to read the liquid depths
Of eyes that trust me wholly—eyes where all
The sweet, wild magic of our dewy vales
And deep, nymph-haunted woods, is woven through
With tender motions of a woman's soul,
Most holy and most mystical. O God!
What days divine beneath the enchanted blue
Might have been ours! What nights unspeakable
When all the spheres should charm our listening sense
With that most ancient harmony that none
But those who love, can hear! Such glorious life
Must needs have been eternal;—we should pass,

Hand clasping hand, together, those dim gates
In the far West, and find the Happy Isles
No dream, but fairer than this old, dear world
Wherein we *felt* immortal.
O thou Soul,
O Zeus—All-Father—God—if we indeed
And all souls living flow from thee, to thee
Return at Death—thou needs must know the depths
And pits of hideous darkness where our souls
Sink down in utter loneliness—no hand
Stretched out to help us,—leave me not to fail
In this last bitterest hour, and fall away
From Truth and Thee. Behold, I lay my life
Bound, on thy great World-Altar, where the blood
Of all who sought thee truly, has gushed forth
To fertilise the barren earth, and sow
A growth of unimaginable plants
Of heavenly hue and odour.—Yet, 'tis dark,
Thick darkness round my heart. O Truth, O God,
Grant me some strength.

(*He throws himself down on the ground beside the body of Cleisthenes and remains motionless for some time. Then Hestia re-enters.*)

Hestia.

Beloved, art thou there?
The darkness deepens, scarce I see thy form.
The rite is over, and I fled away
Before the rest had left the temple gates.
How is it with thy father?

Apollodorus.

Well. He knows
That secret all men long to know. His soul
Is with the immortal Essences. And I
Shall soon be with him. Tell me, love, when come
The messengers to summon me?

Hestia.

E'en now
They follow in my footsteps.

Apollodorus.

Then our time
Is short. Draw near, and lay thy shining head
Here on my shoulder, while I fold thee close,
Close in my arms. This is our marriage night,
And all the eternal eyes above look down
To mingle their pale fire with that which glows
Deep in our souls, as deathless as their own.
Love, canst thou sing to me that little song
Thou mad'st when first we loved, and all the world
Broke into song, as when the laughing waves
Bore Cytheræa, sprung of Ocean-foam
And elemental fire, to her far isle
Sea-washed, for endless worship?

Hestia.

I will try.
My voice will falter, but I'll sing it low
For thee and me.

Song.

"What is the best that earth can show?"
I asked the Sea;
And it replied: "The joy I know
When o'er my ceaseless ebb and flow
The great sun broods with ardent glow
And kisses me."

"What is the best that earth can show?"
I asked the Dove;
And it replied: "The bliss I know
When, nestling in the breast of snow
Of Aphrodite, cooing low,
I simply love."

"What is the best that earth can show?"
I asked the Flower;
And it replied: "The thrill I know
When from my brimming chalice go
The bees with honey to and fro,
And take my dower."

"What is the best that earth can show?"
I asked the Soul;
And it replied: "The peace I know
When, loving Truth, I love men so
That Death and Love together show
One perfect Whole."

Apollodorus.

" When loving Truth "—O child !
What prescient insight breathed these strange high words
Into thy soul, to be my death chant ? Yet
'Tis life thou sing'st of, and thy sweet voice lulls
My poor wild heart to peace ineffable.
For listen.
I will tell thee of a dream
God sent me, for my strength, when thou were gone
And I alone here with the dead—alone
With worse than death, a thousand fiends that tore
My heart, and dragged it down to Stygian depths
Of blackest night. I thought of leaving thee,
Beloved, and all that might have been rose up
With eyes whose bitterness was as the salt
Heaped up, of all the Oceans. Then I lay
Face downwards on the rocky ground, and clenched
My hands upon the senseless stones, for strength.
Lo ! all at once a rush of sunlight poured
Into my soul,—methought I heard a voice
Which said " Look up, and mark." I raised my head,
And there before me was a woman's Form
Standing upon a hillside, closely veiled.
Around her feet sprang flowers ; crystal streams
Rose from her vesture's hem, and flashing down
Towards the purple smoke beneath, where men
Dwelt in the valleys, eager hands were stretched

And caught the liquid crystal, gaining thence
New life and strength. But still her face was veiled.
And then, methought I heard one bitter cry
Ascending from the valley :—" Ah, how long
Shall thy most glorious face be hid from us ?
We languish here in darkness ; sickness, death
And ignorance make havoc in our midst
Because we cannot see thee—thou whose eyes
Hold secrets godlike-fair, and point the clue
To all this weary labyrinth wherein
We vainly wander, yearning towards the heights
But finding yet no issue to the maze
Wherein our feet are set." And then I saw
A man spring forward, leaving the dim crowd
With eyes that shone, and pressing towards the ledge
Whereon the Figure ever stood, her veil
Hiding immortal beauty. Lo ! he reached
Her feet at last, and stretching forth his hand,
Fearless, yet reverent, he drew aside
The veil for one brief moment. Oh, the face
Beneath it ! Though the brow and eyes were still
Hid from our sight, the lips wore such a smile
Ineffable, that all who saw it ceased
From memory of sorrow, pain, and death,
And knew that smile the one reality
In all creation. Mothers clasped their babes
With sobs and laughter ; youths and maidens held
Each others' hands, and knew their love should last
To all eternity ; the dying passed

With rapture, into fuller, fresher life,
And all things were transfigured.
Then the man
Suddenly dropped the veil, and fell down dead.
And then arose the bitter cry again
From those beneath.
And all at once I sprang
Up the steep mountain track, and reached the feet
Of that same awful Figure, and I strove
To draw aside the veil from brow and eyes
While from the valley rose a muttered prayer
To all the gods, and piteous, straining eyes
Followed my every movement.
Then a shout
Rang forth; I *think* I drew the veil aside;
But stricken with intolerable light
I fell, as one that perishes.
But still
The shout rang through my swoon; 'twas as the sound
Of multitudes in some beleagured town
When a delivering army storms the gates
And brings them succour. Then it grew more faint,
And sank to one low murmur of content.
And then I woke and heard thy voice.
So now
I know thy song is true, and that is all
We need to know, both thou and I.
—Is that

The sound of steps approaching?—Dear, be strong;
'Twill soon be over. Have we not good hope
That this, which seems to part us, hath no power
To touch our very selves, our souls? Not Time,
Not Death, nor that vague After-life can touch
My love for thee. O somewhere, sometime, yet
We two shall clasp, and all this present pain
Shall seem like thinnest mist that flees away
Before the blessed Dawn.

(*Messengers enter.*)

Messenger.

The Ephors will
That thou should'st follow us to instant death,
Justly incurred through disobedience
To their most righteous law.

Apollodorus.

'Tis well, my friends.
I come;—one moment.—Hestia, should'st thou see
Our Teacher, tell him that I died not false
To Truth and manliness. Thou must not stay
Here in the dark alone, my child. Go home,
Seek Cleon, he will take this mortal frame
Of my poor father, burning it with all
Due obsequies he would have wished.
And now
One kiss, one long, long kiss, to seal me thine
And Love's for ever. Turn thine impassioned face
Here to the moonlight, let thine eyes meet mine

In utmost faithfulness, whilst all the spheres
Do chant our hymeneal hymn. Farewell.

Hestia.

My love—my love—the Veilèd Figure smiles,
I feel it, though I see it not, and men
Through this thy deed shall pass those western gates
That loom so dread and spectral, fearlessly,
And bless thee, dying. Linger not—my heart
Is not so strong as thine—I would not sink
To woman's weakness—I, thine equal soul,
Pledged to thy strength for ever. O farewell.

Apollodorus.

Farewell, beloved.

(*He follows the messengers.*)

Hestia.

O my God—my God!
Let not my heart break utterly, but hold
My hand in this dark life through which I pass
Towards the glorious West, where he and I
Shall know why Thou didst lay this bitterness
Upon our quivering souls. O touch this wild
Rebellious heart, and let it sink to peace
Before that Veilèd Figure's eyes divine
That smile on him, my love, and all the world
Through him raised nearer to the Perfect Whole.

THE TWIN SISTERS.

A TRUE STORY OF THE MIDLANDS.

As a fair sister by a homely one
Sits Derbyshire beside her neighbour, Notts;
An honest, open, smiling English lass
Who leaves romance to please her sister's heart,
Yet, not quite free from fancies, blossoms out
But once, into a Matlock of her own—
A little valley; half is hers, and half
(Divided by the stream) her sister's share.
Amidst the bare, flat country, 'tis a joy
To come upon this rocky, wooded vale
With peaceful meadows, where the cattle feed
Beside the rippling brook, which broadens out
Anon, into a smooth and wide expanse
Of water—the mill-dam; for even here
The busy hand of Commerce is not still,
And all day long the whirring of the looms
(Woven into the stillness of the place)
Keeps up the memory of the outside world.
But when the shadows lengthen, comes a clang
Of bells, and merry shouts, and eager talk,
As from the two great mills, left silent now,
A stream of folk, with tramping, hurrying feet,

Women with shawls and baskets, men and boys,
Pass through the quiet valley to their homes
Some on this side the stream, and some on that.

Seven years ago or more, you might have seen
(Had you been watchful) two old sisters quit
The noisy throng, and close together press
With even step towards their little home
One side the yard on which the silent mill
Looks down, as if to keep its workers safe.
Their hair is silver; furrows deep are drawn
Upon their patient foreheads, and their lips
Tell of a life-long war with poverty.
Their homespun gowns are scrupulously neat,
Their shawls pinned tight; but though in much alike,
(For they are twins) some distant traces left
Of what in youth had been a love of dress
And pretty things, in Harriet may recall
The different natures of those neighbouring shires
We spoke of at the outset,—one, so wild,
Fantastic, with its rocks, and wooded vales,
The other, simple, homely. (That's to stand
For Mary Ann, who never in her life
Indulged a wish of simple vanity,
But though a handsome lass enough in youth
Cared nought for finery to set her off;
But prized her independence ten times more
Than "keeping company" with any lad
Who sought her favour.) Now with Harriet

T'was different. She loved the lighter side
Of life; prized admiration, which she found
—Or thought she found—in a sharp artizan
Named Williams; him she wedded, but her life,
Pent up within a smoky northern town,
Where then they dwelt, had hardships, for he drank,
And spent her scanty earnings, giving nought
But hard words in return. So when at last
He died, she sought her sister, Mary Ann,
Who leaving the black town, had come to dwell
Here in the quiet valley, near the home
Where fifty years ago their father lived
And taught a school. A hard, strange man was he,
Who, loving learning, yet loved money more,
And in his little daughters' pleading eyes,
That spoke of undeveloped powers, could read
Nought but capacity for making gain.
And when scarce six years old, he sent them both
To earn their bread by working twelve long hours
Each day, in the grey mill beside the stream.
He had his way. No School Boards flourished then
To assert the Principle against the Man;
And so the children, early thus bereft
Of childhood's freedom from the cares of bread
Took rank among the citizens of the world
And grew inured to toil. But Harriet,
Who pleased her father with her pretty ways,
He taught to read, and felt some little pride
In the child's quickness, when he'd reach her down

The worn Old Testament, and bid her read
The hard names in the battles of the Kings.
Fearless she read them out, while, open-eyed
With wonder, Mary Ann stood by and heard,
Resting her small brown arms beside the book
Upon the scoured deal table, marvelling much
At Harriet's cleverness; yet now and then
A shade of envy dimmed the clear brown eyes
As she would plead, "O father, learn me too!
Thee knows, I'm sharp enough! thee allers says
I'd make a first-rate scholard if thee chose
To learn me; then, when mother has a bout*
I'd take and read a chapter."
"Nay, my lass,"
He'd answer then half sadly, "one's enough;
I can't make scholards of you both. Don't fesh
With books—they never brought me money yet,
But stick to work, and lay your savings by
To keep you from the House when I am gone."
Then would the clear brown eyes be dimmed with tears,
And with her arms around her father's neck
She'd sob, "I'll work for me and Harriet too;
We won't go i' the House; we'd sooner clem;
She'll be the scholard, and I'll work for her;
You say I'm quick for such a little 'un,
So may be I shall catch it up from her."
But then his mood would change; he'd cast her off

* A fit of illness.

Quite roughly, muttering, "Get away, my gell;
Go mind your stitching; food and drink's enough
For such as us to think of, schooling's dear;
I teach 'em 'cause I'm paid for it, that's all."
So by degrees in the child's mind there grew
The thought that she should work for Harriet.
Of course, 'twas natural, that brought up fine
And taught to read, she could not work so hard,
And loved to buy a fairing now and then,
A bit of ribbon, or a gay print gown,
To make the lads look after her and say
"Eh! she's a pretty 'un, is Harriet!"
And what cared Mary Ann for such as they?

But when their father died, they came to live
Beside their brother in the northern town,
Where all day long the humming of the wheels
And tramp of feet along the rough paved street
Grate harshly on the idle, careless ear,
With thought of workers, who from morn to eve
Must toil, for bread is dear, and wages scant.
And here they lived a pinched and hard-fought life,
Working the life-long year from June to June,
With scanty pleasures, long-remembered. Once
They stood among a crowd that gaped to see
A wonder—carriages that ran along
Without a horse! and once, they saw the lights
That flashed from every window, when the Queen
Took up the sceptre in her girlish hand.

But when her sister married, Mary Ann
Was free to leave the dismal northern town,
And for a space, the wholesome country air
Brought health and peace, and she was well content.
Her fellow-workers liked her, and respect
Was hers, for she was honest as the day.
But then came letters—not from Harriet,
She never learnt to write—but from a friend,
Telling of troubles growing worse and worse
With Harriet. Her husband out of work
Because he drank—her scanty matters pawned;
Even the Bible which their father left
Had gone with all the rest—and she was forced
To sit up half the night at needlework
To pay the rent. Then Mary Ann took down
A small deal box from off the mantelshelf
Wherein her earnings for the last six months
Were stored. Without them, no new gown,
Of which she stood in need, this year were hers;
What matter? Certain 'twas that Harriet
Stood more in need than she; for brought up fine
And taught to read, she could not work so hard,
And then a man was ever thriftless. So
The money went. She got a friend to write,
A lad named Joe, more skilled in penmanship
Than most among her mates, more skilled as well
In reading faces, and one face he loved
Above the rest. He marked how thin she grew,
Her clothes how threadbare, though she strove to hide

Her want, and would not borrow, though she starved.
So one day after work (it was a keen
And bleak November evening) Joe drew near
To where she walked alone, for pride of late
Had made her hold aloof from other girls
Lest they should mark her want.
So Joe began
"Good evening, Mary Ann!" more awkwardly
Than usual; "You've heard the money's safe?"
"No," she replied, "they've never wrote to say;
But if it weren't, then they'd have wrote again,
So it's all right."
"Nay, lass, I doubt it's *not*
All right," he answered, slackening his pace
To drop behind the rest. "Thee'll sooner clem
Than borrow owt from us, and times is hard,
Hardest of all for thee. Now listen, lass;
I'm strong—I work full time, and mother's all
I have to keep at home"—
"No, thank'ee, Joe,"
She cried, and tossed her head; "I don't want none
Of all your money, I have kep' myself
Till now; I'll never borrow yet, please God,
I'll stand alone."
"That isn't what I meant,
Thee takes me up too sudden," he replied.
"Money the husband earns to keep the wife,
That's not like borrowed money. . . . Dost thee
see?

A woman's quick at seeing. . . . Mary Ann,
I've loved thee true this many a day."
With that
He strove to take her hand, but she drew back
And wrapped her shawl more closely round her, while
A sudden colour flushed her sallow cheek.
"Thee means it well, I know, my lad," she said,
"But let's ha' done with that. I've seen enough
Of poor folks wedded. That's for gentry, not
For you and me. When troubles come, it's worse
For two than one, and then they're forced to ask
The neighbours help them. No, I'll never wed.
Don't take it ill. Thee'll find some honest lass
Who'll make thee a good wife."
But Joe broke out,
"Thee knows, I shan't! What's any lass to me?
It's thee I want, no other!" and again
He groped to find her hand.
"It's all no use;
When I have spoke, I've spoke. Now don't be vexed;
Oo's been a faithful friend to me, my lad,
That's all I want. Goodnight."
She turned away,
And Joe, without another word, strode off
With sorrow in his heart.
But when she reached
Her little room, she dropped upon her knees
Beside the bed, and bowed her head and wept

As never she had wept before.—" Oh Joe,
A true wife I'd have been to thee, God knows!
But it's for *her*—for Harriet. Shall she come
And find no home here either? Joe and I
Enough to do to keep ourselves, and she
Turned out to earn her living as she may?
No, we will stick together to the end."
And so she rose and went about her work
That day and every day, till winter changed
To summer, and the savings in her box
Were doubled by her frugal living. Then
Came news. Her sister's hushand, while in drink,
Had been run over, and his life was gone
Within two days; and all the money left
Had gone to bury him, for while he lived
He'd never put a penny in the Club
Against his funeral; "but don't be feared,
We buried him quite handsome, gloves and all,"
The letter said; and then went on to tell
That just enough was left for Harriet
To join her sister; and next day she came.
'Twas three years since they parted; both were changed,
But Harriet most; her pretty looks were gone,
Her cheeks were sunken, and her eyes grown dim
With constant watching. Either scarcely knew
The other. As they walked across the fields,
Between them that small bundle which contained
All Harriet's worldly goods, towards the Vale

Which henceforth was her home, her sister strove
To cheer her, for she could not speak for tears
And all her ancient spirit quite crushed out
By years of misery.
" Coom, lass, cheer up ! "
Said Mary Ann ; " we've got each other still ;
I've plenty for us both, and don't you mind
What father said when we was little gells,
That I should be the husband, thee the wife ?
He'd set us on the table, side by side,
And say, " Why, here's my daughter—here's my son ! "
And then he'd pat my cheek, and say that I
Should keep the wolf away when he was gone,
And we were left alone. And then I'd cry
" Ay, father, I'se a man ! " Oh, how he'd laugh,
And call us sharp 'uns, both of us ! But thee
He allus thought the sharpest."
Then she smiled,
And something of her ancient heart came back
Before they reached the cottage in the yard
Beside the great grey mill.
And here they lived
An uneventful life for many years ;
A kind of Indian Summer, passing o'er
In sober work, together growing old,
But well-content, for cruel Want no more
Snatch'd at their peace, nor were their pleasures dead.

The neighbours all were kind, and oftentimes
The master's daughter came and read a tale
Well known and loved by both of them. Or else
She'd set the kettle on the hob and find
The old black teapot and the china mugs
That once they bought at Cleethorpes, with the train
Painted upon them ; and they'd tell her how
They stood that day among the crowd to see
The carriages that went without a horse,
And many a tale besides.
Then came a day
When Harriet fell ill and took to bed.
Her hardships in her early days had worn
Her power of resistance, and she sank
By slow degrees. Her lingering illness touched
The clearness of her mind, and oftentimes
She'd say sharp things to poor old Mary Ann,
Which brought the tears into the old brown eyes ;
But still she never faltered in her care
And loving tenderness, and when at last
The summons came—that bond of seventy years
Was severed, and the neighbours sorrowing bore
The poor worn body to its resting-place
Within the green churchyard,—the brave old heart
Broke down ; she lay and sobbed upon the grave,
Called wildly for "our Harriet," promised none
Should make her think those harsh words changed
their love
In any wise. She did not want to live ;

She'd always lived for Harriet, and now
They'd hidden her away.
Then gentle hands
Led the old woman home, and there the sight
Of things that had been Harriet's—all the clothes
And little keepsakes which their friends had sent
From time to time, changed her despairing mood
To quiet sorrow, and with silent tears
She dusted all the things and laid them by
Inside her old oak-chest.
For many months
She lived as in a dream, and half believed
Her sister still was there. But kindly Time
And her strong nature partly healed the wound
And brought her back to waking life, where now
A kind of autumn sunshine hovers round
Her silvery hair and furrowed brow, and brings
A deep and quiet thankfulness for all
Her blessings, as she calls them. If you ask
If she has need of aught, she'll shake her head,
And say she's much to be most thankful for,
And tell you that through all her eighty years
She's gone on getting better off, and now
There's nothing more to wish—except, indeed,
She often wishes she could read a book
To while away the time, like Harriet.
But in her young days schooling was not free
To all, as now it is; and if they knew—
The young folk—what their blessings were, how glad

They ought to be to learn whate'er they can!
Ah! faithful, true old soul! methinks that thou
Hast gained more wisdom in thine eighty years
Than all the learning of the schools can give!

*WHITHER ?**

Lines written after attending a Positivist service at Newton Hall, Fetter Lane, E.C.

And this contents you ? This can still the cry
That goes up from the darkness where we sit
Dreaming of home—the solitary place
In all this numbing Universe, wherein
Our hearts may be at ease—because we love,
And dream we are beloved ? If 'tis a dream,
No more—why then that dream's more dear to us
Than all dull Matter that our hands may touch
And minds acknowledge Fact. Will Fact assuage
This passionate quenchless thirst to pierce beneath
The veil of the Actual ? all its cruelty
Trampled beneath the godlike feet of man,
Its insolent yoke spurned from him, having that
Within, which renders him invulnerable
To all its tyranny—another air
That's round him ever, though earth's atmosphere
Close round and stifle him ? You are content
To yield you captive to the idiot Force,

* This poem is included for whatever value it may have as an expression of the dualistic point of view. If, however, the monistic standpoint be taken, the antithesis dwelt on in these lines falls to the ground.

Whirled round in its unconscious, eddying gulfs,
Mixed with its alien life—a life not yours
Through æons passed, and æons yet to come?
Without a hint of yours; for can the wheel
That's set in motion by the master-hand
Judge why it spins? 'Tis blind, and deaf, and dead
Eternally; but you, who know 'tis so
Because you are outside of it, you're still
Content, when seventy summers shall have passed,
To leave your natural place, where now you stand
Erect beside that master-hand, and gain
Dim glimpses of its purpose (we allow
They're dim, but yet the gap is of degree
Not kind) and stretch yourselves beneath the wheels
Till your whole substance shall be mixed with theirs,
Knowing no other life? Why, even Pride
By which the Son of Morning raised up Hell
And all its devils, should have power to keep
This thought at arm's length. Shall we brook that we
Who once have known the Universe our thrall,
Should feel its iron yoke upon our necks
Nor turn and cry "Thou hast no power, none"?

Did *these* submit, these calm and dauntless brows
Who in their marble stillness here gaze down
Upon your hopeless worship?
Plato, vast
As Ocean, with its tidal fealty

To skiey influences; Dante, strong
To bear his bitter exile, breathing air
Of Paradise, whence none might banish him;
Shakespeare, a royal figure 'midst his throng
Of royal men and women; (had *they* been
So strong to live, if vassals unto Death?)
Homer, who saw the eternal spring-tide youth
Of heights Olympian in the souls of men
Unquenchable in Hades; then the great
Aurelius, steadfast in all saint-like aim,
Whose ponderous palace walls were thin as air
Before his wingèd soul in upward flight
Towards crystal mountain-peaks; Goethe the wise,
Who saw the heart of the Visible, heard it beat
In time with the Invisible, knew them one,
Fearless to look the human through and through
And sound the depths of darkness:—Ah! could
these,
This deathless company, have reached their height
Of sovereign manhood, nor have stood erect,
Thundering defiance eternal 'gainst the yoke
Of Matter over Spirit? Had they lived
So prodigal of mind, and heart, and brain,
As if Eternity were round them, Time
A fleeting shadow,—bounded by the thought
That Darkness was their lord? a puny race
Who fancy they touch heaven, while in truth
The smallest fly that crawls its hour and dies
Becomes their equal in that final Night

Which levels all?

Forgive us, calm, great brows,
If, being clogged with actualities
Swathing our eyes, we cannot see that light,
Around you, not of earth, by which ye walked,
Which made you what you are—the beacon flames
To lead us through the storm; unconquerable
For ever, since you knew it; lords of Time,
And striking all his fetters off our hands
By your bold challenge. Were it worth your while
To gain this empty victory for us
And for yourselves, if at the last we fall
(His destined prey) into the void Abyss,
Which swallows us for ever? All our hopes
Which beat at heaven's gate; our loves, more deep
Than space, which palpitates with rushing wings
Of star-compelling angels; nameless tides
Of yearning after some dim splendour seen
In trances of the spirit, haunting us
With rarest loveliness, unmatchable,—
To sink at last into the All-Inane,
Cancelled, destroyed, as never they had been?
Why, 'tis a nightmare worse than any dream
We cherish blindly; if a dream it be,
'Tis then the only precious thing we know
In all this howling waste; we'll keep our dream
Nor change it for your nightmare.

If you say
Because we dream, we sleep, then surely we

Have right as good to say, your nightmare proves
A slumber deep as ours.
—Ah me! I think
We're both like mariners o'er wind-tossed seas,
Our eyes fast sealed in sleep, while silently
We float 'twixt deeps above and deeps below
Without a pilot, ever driving on
In some compellèd course we wot not of,
Some hidden spirit-hand upon the helm.
You dream you'll wake and find those awful deeps
Around you everlastingly, while *we*. . . .
Ah! through our dreams we dimly hear a voice
Wafted from eastward-lying lands, towards which
Our bark is ever tending, lands where now,
Perchance, the dawn is breaking; all sweet sounds
Of wakening Nature mingled with the pulse
Of tender hearts that yearn to welcome us
After our dreary, homeless voyaging;
A voice that whispers:
"Children, sleep awhile
Without a care, nor dream your course is lost
Across the trackless waves; the ship makes straight
For home, where loving arms shall fold you fast;
And, while you sleep, the night begins to wane
And streaks are seen to eastward, while the faint
Fresh breeze of daybreak greets your foam-swept sails
And dries their salt tears with its healing kiss,
Drawing you ever nearer. Ah, sleep on,

Forgetful of the Night and all its brood
Of shapeless Terrors; *dreams* are mine to give,
A precious gift! how precious you shall know
When you shall wake 'midst those realities
They dimly shadow forth; till then, sleep on,
Because your eyes are sealed in tenderness
By One Who wills not that His children swoon
To see those dread abysses, crushing them
With stony blankness. His the hand that guides
Your prow towards that Morning-continent
On which your eyes shall open, with the beams
Of doubt-dispelling sunshine, and the pure
Cool wind of morning clearing every sense
To sober, blessed consciousness of home
Attained at last—at last."

HAND IN HAND.

To ——.

I REMEMBER in the garden one fair summer long ago,
When the sun was sinking slowly through the pine trees' ruddy glow,
All at once you left the lawn, Dear, left it, you and he together,
Turned your faces towards the glory, then you leapt into the heather
Eager to behold the sunset turning all the stems to flame
Ere the happy day was folded in that Peace from whence it came.

As I watched you disappearing, in my heart there rose a prayer
Sudden, deep, and very earnest, for I knew God sent it there.
And I prayed while standing silent with the sweet grass underneath
And the gentle wind of evening blowing from the scented heath,
Prayed that God would keep you ever strong and true in His deep rest,

Hand in hand to journey always towards the glory of the West.
For though sunrise follows sunset, and at times the day seems long,
And the heat strikes on our foreheads, we'll not falter in our song.
After all our pain and sadness, lo! the earth is clothed with Spring,
And we weep for very gladness at so fair and strange a thing.

For 'twas many years ago, Dear, many things have chanced since then,
Voices we have loved are silent, sounding not on earth again.
Gone the early morning freshness, when the world lay elfin-bright;
We have cried into the darkness, questioned all the stars of Night,

And we fear it now no longer, for it laid its mighty hand
On our restless hearts and stilled them with a music dim and grand.
Lingering on through sultry noon-day, never can that music die,
For its harmonies were wafted from the far Eternity.

Interwoven with your joyful Easter carols it shall ring,

And your joy shall be immortal, filled with fragrance
of the Spring;
Carrying with you breaths of Heaven through the
crowded thoroughfares,
Cooling weary, fevered foreheads, breathed on by
diviner airs.
Hand in hand you watched the sunset, hand in hand
you watch its rise,
Strong to do, and be, and suffer, through that Love
which makes you wise.

I who love you both so truly, pray as once before I
prayed
Standing in that quiet garden while the day began
to fade;
Pray that Peace may fold you ever in her star-em-
broidered veil
Woven with the mystic crimson flowing from the
Holy Grail;
Then, through winter and through summer never can
your joy decay,
For the sunset's crimson glow is herald of the perfect
day.

AN EVENING THOUGHT.

SHINE down upon my troubled heart
  O pure and white untroubled Star!
The day was weary, racked with doubts,
  But now I see things as they are.

O cursed be all my selfish wants,
  My restless thirst for praise and place;
The sun shone on a whited mask,
  Thou shinest on a human face.

Lift me above this fret and stir,
  Shine deep into my soul; and then
Might I but see those steadfast eyes
  Like thine, that sought thee,—godlike men

Of far-gone days, who lifted free
  Their foreheads to thy purest light,
Contented, if 'twas theirs to see
  Through starlit woods Truth's robe gleam white—

I think I should not greatly grieve
  Though Love and Fame were dreams, and past;
The worlds are ours with all their hopes,
  And God shall give us Peace at last.

AT BIARRITZ.

Oxen of the solemn pace
Wit you of your kingly race?
Know that Egypt's skies are blue
As those of Biarritz, yet o'er you
Like a canopy they spread,
While with garlands for your head
Long robed priestesses drew near
Raising hymns and praises clear?

There, immovable and staid
Standing while the people prayed,
Many heartfelt supplications
Ye have heard from dusky nations.
With Osiris once so great
Then ye ranked, but now your fate
Makes you toil beneath his rays,
Wending patiently your ways
On the glaring, dusty road,
Hastened by the cruel goad.
With a captive brother bound
Slow ye pace; the only sound
That your coming doth foretell
Is the little tinkling bell.

Fallen from your high estate
Ye well may seem; but how if Fate
Through your humble, patient lot,
Say to us: "True kings are not
Those who sit above the crowds
Wrapped in fragrant incense-clouds,
Turning deaf and heedless ears
To the people's hopes and prayers.
No, the king is he who serves,
Who the meanest's good observes,
Wills his subjects to be free.
Least of all a tyrant he;
Least of all doth seek his pleasure
Giving over all his leisure
To his people's good and peace."

Thus, O mild-eyed ones! I cease
To lament that Fortune's wheel
Hardly with you seems to deal,
Since a truer glory lies
In your humble ministries
Here beneath the Pyrenees
Near the murmur of the seas,
Than in ancient adoration
By old Egypt's mighty nation.

A THOUGHT FOR A WORKER.

It is enough, if at the close of day,
Thou, resting wearied limbs, canst truly say,
"I have walked humbly with my God this day;"
It is enough.

Though failure, oft repeated, dim the light
Of high resolve, wherewith thy youth was bright,
If each fresh morn thou gird thee to the fight,
It is enough.

Though hopes which made the world seem half
divine
Fade in thy clasp and suffer slow decline,
If thou for others' hopes exchangest thine,
It is enough.

Though thou hast laboured hard where idlers reap
The fool-crowd's plaudits through its sodden sleep,
If thou a heart most lowly-pure dost keep,
It is enough.

Though thou hast longed in vain to find a friend
Whose glance thy heart's sore loneliness can mend,
If thou hast loved thine own unto the end,
It is enough.

Though death should come ere half the projects
vast,
Which seemed thy life's breath, into form are cast,
If without wrath or fear thou breathe thy last,
It is enough.

And when the Dark shall flee before the Day,
And God shall comfort thee in His great way,
Then thou at last in utter peace shalt say
"It is enough."

THE HILL OF VISION.

"O WHERE are you going, my son, my son?
Why climb that lonesome hill?
The winds are up and the day nigh done,
And the sunset bodeth ill."

"O mother, sweet mother, nay, loose my hand!
I cannot choose but go;
On that purple ridge I this eve must stand
And read my weird below."

He freed himself, and he strode away
Up the wind-swept hill alone:
And over the land the shadows lay,
And the sky like a witch-fire shone.

One moment he stood on the hill's bare height
And faced the flaming skies,
Then he turned and strode back through the gathering night
With a secret in his eyes.

"O what have you seen, my son, my son?
Why look you so stern and old?
What weird have the three dark sisters spun
That your hand is icy cold?

" Say, what did you see from the hill-top bare
In the shadowy vale beneath ?
Was it some witch-woman with sun-bright hair
And blue eyes cruel as death ?

" Or was it a vanishing exquisite maid,
The centre of dreams of youth ?
Or was it—I shudder—what makes me afraid ?
A black cross, naked as Truth ? "

" O mother, sweet mother, now ask me no more !
What it was, I may not say;
Not even you, who my body bore,
May know what I've seen this day.

" Nor though I should live to be old and white
May I tell any human soul:
But through all my life shall this evening's sight
Each thought and act control.

" And I know that the day before I die
I shall climb that hill again,
And facing the blood-red evening sky
That vision shall be made plain.

" The shadowy vale shall darker grow
As night falls over the land;
But my weird shall flash forth in the sun's last glow,
I shall see—and shall understand."

INFINITUDE.

If it must be, O Lord, if it must be
That ever as some higher peak we gain
In seeking Thee,
Beneath us lie such deepening depths, that pain
And awfulness in gazing down alone
Do so o'ercome us that we fear to swoon—
Then give us strength to reach a human hand
To some lone brother in that silent land,
—If it must be.

If it must be, O Lord, if it must be
That as we climb, some unsuspected height
We ever see
Still rising up before us, till the sight
Of that unending pilgrimage we're bound
To follow, turns our sick gaze on the ground—
Then towards the stars O lift Thou up our eyes
And calm us with their mystic harmonies,
—If it must be.

GERDA'S SONGS.

(From the libretto of the opera "Hertha.")

I.

"Why wander so late by the darkening foam,
O fisherman's daughter?"
"I seek my true lover who never came home
O'er the western water."

"Was he strong and tall and fair to see,
O fisherman's child?"
"O tall and strong and fair was he,
And his blue eyes smiled."

"Haste home, haste home, O maiden lone!
Thy love is lost.
The Sea-Maid hath ta'en him for her own
And holds him fast.

"Her kiss was like ice and fire, her eyes
Like the beryl cold;
In her pale green halls he forever lies
While the world grows old."

II.

(*From the original libretto of the opera "Hertha."*)

METHOUGHT I lay at set of sun
Upon a pine-clad hill;
I slept, and when I woke 'twas night;
Around me all was still.

Lo! like a wraith the moon uprose!
A rush of tiny feet!
The elfin-folk, with magic song
Came trooping past my seat.

Some flew to shake the swaying bells
Of mountain blossoms fair,
Whose heart gave forth a charmèd peal
Of music wild and rare.

Some caught the starshine in the cups
Of harebells wet with dew,
While crystal-clear o'er wood and mere
The elfin bugles blew.

"Haste, haste away," methought they sang,
"To where the lovers dwell!
We'll bear them gifts, for fairy folk
Love all such mortals well.

" Our gifts shall be of royal wise,
For royal are these twain!
We'll bring them songs and light, that they
May ne'er know grief again.

" The heart of flowers shall yield us songs,
And light, the starry skies;
The songs shall nestle in their hearts,
The starshine in their eyes."

WALDA'S SONG.

(From the original libretto of the opera "Hertha.")

GLORIOUS world with thy streams and thy mountains,
Clouds sailing over the infinite sea!
Praises unending I sing to thy beauty,
Make me as thou art—exultant and free!

Here in my heart is thy throne spread with purple,
Spirit that ridest on wings of the blast!
Freedom! with eyes born of sunshine and starshine,
Enter, and take up thy sceptre at last!

Why are ye fearful, my brothers and sisters?
Stand at my side, look me straight in the eyes!
Though I be Queen, ye are each of you royal,
Crowned with a glory—a crown from the skies.

Hark! from the lowliest hearths in my kingdom
Rises a mighty and jubilant song!
See! through the fields in the light of the morning
Goes a fair company, godlike and strong!

Fathers and mothers, brave youths and fair maidens,
  Children as lovely as spirits of May;
Free, fearing nothing, they wend through the meadows,
  Joyfully hailing the new-risen day.

These are my people,—O people, I love you!
  Dear men and women whose hearts beat with mine!
Free, for your sakes, shall my soul be for ever;
  Make us, O Freedom, eternally thine!

MORNING SONG TO FREEDOM.

(Final chorus from the original libretto of the opera "Hertha.")

LIGHT, that now risest from Ocean! we worship thee, seeing thee glow
Deep in the eyes of these twain whom we follow through weal and through woe!
Love, we behold thee and worship thee! come to us, e'en in such guise
As to these, thy glad children, who fear not to look even Death in the eyes!
As to us they have held hands of healing, so make thou us strong, that through thee
We may stretch forth our hands to the nations across our untameable sea
And strike off the chains of the captives, till, link'd in one fellowship vast,
The whole of mankind, free and godlike, attain its true stature at last.
Freedom, thou holiest, loveliest daughter of Love and of Light!
Lovely as gates of the morning, holy as stars of the night,

Freedom, we worship thee! hither, O hither across
the salt foam
From thy seat in the heaven of heavens, O come,
make our island thy home!
Light, Love, and Freedom, thrice mighty! Against
thee what ill shall prevail?
How shall we name thee, Unnameable? Holiest!
Hail to thee, hail!

LINES TO A COMPOSER ON HIS BIRTHDAY.

GIFTS—the richest! Colour-glory, Titian's glow and
Pheidias' line!
Gifts—the noblest! Words undying, Shakespeare's
flash and Dante's shrine!
Gifts—the purest! Bach's high chant and Beethoven's
great spirit-war!
Gifts—the fairest! Morning's rose and evening's
first pale, holy star!
What of gifts can earth show better? Yet, if all
were ours to give—
All that's richest, noblest, purest, fairest in this life
we live—
Could it make this soul the richer, in whose depths
all riches lie,
Glory, grace, and inspiration flashing forth in
harmony?
Nay! no gifts, when all that's precious lies in one
divinest power,
His that power of mighty music—glow and flash and
rose and star!
Gifts—for *us!* Ah, *this* we wish him! Still to have
and still to give!
His be still this crown of blessing—power to bless
all souls that live!

"LOVE AND DEATH."

On the picture by G. F. Watts, R.A.

If Love be mighty to impel the stars,
—Ah me! can this be Love on which I gaze?
This piteous boy, his blue eyes all amaze
At cruel wrong, his outstretched arm that bars
His dear home's threshold—effort vain that mars
His rainbow wings—all powerless to evade
The entrance of that silent, shrouded Shade
Whose step relentless presses on, nor spares
The flowers, whose petals on the threshold lie,
The tender flowers, that Love's dear home entwined?
Ah, could he speak, yon shrouded Mystery
With grave, bent head, perchance might say:
"Love's eye
Of blue eterne, with burning tears is blind,
Else would he see, the face of Death is kind."

"*HOPE.*"

On the picture by G. F. Watts, R.A.

Look up, ye weary-hearted, spent with sighs;
Say not "all's dark" while one fair spirit here
Keeps loyal vigil o'er your shadowed sphere.
And yet not vigil—blindfold are her eyes;
She sees not yet the end of miseries
That, rising like harsh discords from beneath,
Have riven the lyre her faithful arms enwreath.
—For from that sphere ascend no harmonies,
Ah no! but moaning on its single string
Like midnight wind, one note of anguish frets
Her lyre, and yet she smiles while bending low,
A sweet, worn smile, wafted from far-off Spring.
"Sweet note!" she seems to murmur, "well I know
Thou chim'st with that one star which never sets."

"THE LEGEND OF THE BRIAR ROSE."

On the pictures by Sir E. Burne Jones.

THE dreamful loveliness enthralled so long
Awaits thy kiss, O Prince in whose deep eyes
The spiritual strength of pureness lies.
Pale knight, through strife and star-lit vigil strong,
Thy counter-charm shall loose this ancient wrong.
The spell-bound world waits on thy high emprise,
Ah! bid the thorn-girt, perfect woman rise!
For while *she* sleeps, all sleep; the maidens' song
By fount and loom is hushed; with trancèd brows
The nation's guides lie slumbering. Prince! not dead
Is she, the world's hope, though her warm limbs stay
Bound as in grave clothes. See, above her head
The dawn is reddening! Thy pure kiss shall rouse
With her, the enfranchised earth to Life and Day.

"TOIL AND STORM."

On the picture by J. P. Beadle, representing three peasant-women of Brittany engaged in clearing the "terrain" from débris after the harvest, on a wild sea-coast.

WILD, gusty, desolate, the day wanes fast;
The thunders of the wind-tormented sea
Roll at their feet, yet still they toil, these three
Pale workers, spite of storm and driving blast.
For work is still to do ere light be past—
The land swept clean for next year's crop. But she—
The youngest, wearies? Through the gloom doth see
With straining eyes afar some hapless mast
Tossed on the waves? Poor child! ah, wiser 'twere
To toil with these thy sisters, and endure.
For, while you work, the sky, unnoticed, clears;
The sea weaves spells of peace, the stars shine pure
As home you pass, your faithful labours o'er,
And in your hearts the song of all the spheres.

THE TRIBUTE-MONEY.

Ah! not alone to these, the worldly-wise
Blind teachers of the Law, who vainly sought
To entangle Him in speech, His answer, fraught
With unifying insight's power, applies.
For teachers in these vexëd days arise
Who cry, "To Cæsar, Cæsar's! There is nought
To render elsewhere!" others, "Cæsar's court
Is vain! To God what God's is! Let our eyes
Heedless of earthly kingdoms, seek that throne
Behind the veil, our souls yield tribute there."
Amidst the strife of such, thrice blest are they
To whom their Master's words stand trulier known;
Who give to Cæsar, Cæsar's, yet who dare
With palm unsoil'd, to God their tribute pay.

SOCIALISM.

Of social wrongs that sap society
And make one joyless treadmill of our land
He spoke, the bitter Democrat :—" We stand
Between starvation and satiety,
With ever one abhorred anxiety
'Neath Waste and Want—the Workhouse ! " then he planned
A future commonwealth, when every hand
Should serve the State in forced sobriety.
Yet while he spoke, beside his chair stood One
With brows thorn-bound, and eyes whose depths serene
A clue to earth's dark problems did disclose.
The speaker saw Him not, or had he seen
Perchance had said " The Christ ?—His day is done ! "
And yet those eyes fathomed our modern woes.

ISOLATION.

METHOUGHT I saw the great ones of the world
Standing like mountain-peaks, alone, alone;
Whose immemorial summits' storm-swept stone
Where wreathèd mists their spectral pennon furled
Woke pity in me. "O, my God!" I cried,
"Must it be thus? This age-long loneliness
Must needs be agony. No foot may press
These aching slopes, no blue-eyed children hide
Their fresh, cool faces in the wholesome grass;
No voice can break the silence which they hold.
The doom is hard. Is there no help?" I said.
Then in the wind down-borne a voice did pass,
Solemn with gladness: "Think me not all cold;
The morning sun's first splendour strikes my head.'

THE UNKNOWN SONG.

THAT calm, heroic time I picture oft
When in the quiet vales of ancient Greece
The shepherd sang, and on the hills was peace,
And with content blithe maidens carolled soft.
Then men were strong and simple, free from art,
And loved the mountain tops and murmuring shades
Where crescented Diana and her maids,
The modest-robèd stars, did chase the hart
That westward ever fled, himself to save;
While from each bubbling spring and gnarlèd tree
Naiad and Dryad crept, and in the sea
Nereus' daughters tossed the moon-tipt wave;
But of their songs no mortal ear might know
The purport—nought save sea and streamlet's flow.

A SEA SHELL.

FRONTING the western sea we stood; deep calm
With evening came; the waves scarce rose and fell.
Stooping, you picked a tiny, pearl-hued shell
Out of a pool, and set it on your palm
And said "It means *a pilgrimage;*" and lost
In thoughts unspoken, silently stood we
In utter quiet, gazing out to sea.
O fellow pilgrim, who with me art tossed
Out of the depths on this strange shore, still fraught
With echoes faint of our unfathomed home,
The tide that brought us in its morning rush
Shall sweep us back at eve. Ah, let it come!
For well we know, this frail shell, finely wrought,
The seas shall cradle tenderly—not crush.

TO———

With a volume of Tennyson's Songs.

I SAID: "What gift for one from foreign climes
May help to bring again those skies of blue?
What, in our wailing English autumn, chimes
With warmth of colour, joyous sound and hue?
The wind that whirls the leaf and drives the cloud
Till evening wraps the meadows in a shroud,
How can this mind us of the mirror'd rest
Of Venice, fairest city of the West?
You have brought sunshine from those realms of gold
Still lingering in your smile; I can but bring
The songs of one who yet found voice to sing
'Neath skies so grey as ours, nor grew heart-cold
With stormy winter's stress. O, hold it true,
Our hearts make summer, dearest one, for you!

TO———

NAY, Sweet, 'tis nothing new! What though the light
Of your life's love first break upon you now,
What though its radiance shine from your pure brow
Telling of some great Day beyond our Night;
What though your gracious kindness melt the snows
Of world-worn, weary hearts, and cannot cease
To gladden his, who, finding you, finds Peace,—
Yet, 'tis no change.—You are not one of those
Love lifts from drear December into May;
On us, your nearest, you have ever shed
May's healing charm while snows lay thick around;
'Tis but the essence of a perfect day.
In his true eyes your truth with truth doth wed,
And by his love your sweet life's love is crowned.

TO———

October's sun foretells the coming May,
Like one whose parting glance hath caught a gleam
Of that last fairest Spring across the stream
Unwittingly called Death. Who shall not say,—
Seeing this wealth of golden lights that play
O'er wood and heathy common, birds that seem
Like souls in bliss,—that winter's but a dream,
Which scatters with the throstle's April lay?
What sure, blest Springs may then be hoped for thee,
Thy spirit lit by that undying sun
Of Love whose light o'erleaps th' encircling night!
—For one who stands beside the sapphire sea
Hearing its cosmic music, winter's done,
And every May brings fairer, holier light.

TO———

I.

High in an eastern chamber richly dight
I sat and watched the sunrise. Fountains tossed
Their spray to kiss the morning star, while lost
'Mid listening angels, sang the lark, and bright
As gods, men strode across the plain. No light
Save that which flooded Avalon or Thrace
E'er broke with such enchantment from the face
Of Dawn, as that I saw. At noonday's height
I strove to see it still, but ah! too soon
The twilight into dreary darkness died,
Veiling the East as with a funeral stole.
The high, lone chamber, lighted not by moon
Nor any star, appalled me. "God!" I cried,
"Send back the light, or send some human soul!"

II.

Long time the darkness lasted. Forms of dread,
Eyeless, that glided past me, froze my breath;
The twin and awful shapes of Life and Death
Mute, motionless, immense, with veilèd head,
O'erwhelmed me utterly. Fain had I fled,
But could not stir. The primal mysteries
Lay heaped on me like earth upon the eyes
Of one long buried. "O my God!" I said,
'I ask not now to sit aloft, apart,
Watching the Dawn's unearthly magic break;
I loathe this haunted solitude. My heart
Cries out for men, not visions. Down below
Among the toilers on the plain I'll take
My stand, and wait for day. O let me go!"

III.

Lo! suddenly a hand that clasped my hand
And raised me where I lay; a voice that said
"The daybreak, see!" Then gently was I led
Nearer the wide-flung casement. All the land
Lay clear and cold with dew. A toilsome band
Of wayworn men and women passed, their tread
Weary, yet very patient. Each bent head
Was touched with solemn light, that did expand
Into a glory, as the sun rose slow.
Then she who stood beside me said: "Above
We must not stay. Come down."
I turned, and lo!
A light like that which lit the toilers, shone
Deep in her eyes, yet mixed with my lost Dawn,
And fairer far, for Light there wedded Love.

IV.

O VAIN these faltering words of mine, most vain
To speak what burns within me. How express
In speech, the passionate great thankfulness
Of one from darkness and a place of pain
Led forth to feel God's precious sun and rain
And look on human faces? I possess
No power at all to bless as I would bless
Her who delivered me; yet am I fain
To wish her something fairer than e'er shone
In poet's verse, she who through deeper night
Than mine, for Love's dear sake has often pressed.
Some Dawn may Christ stand near her, all the light
Of later centuries with Love at one
In His deep eyes, and she, beholding, rest.

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